Home Life on Early Ranches of Southwest Texas

CHAPTER XVI

George Lord
DeWitt County

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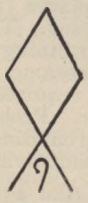


Diamond and a Half 9
Brand of Katie Lord
Carter

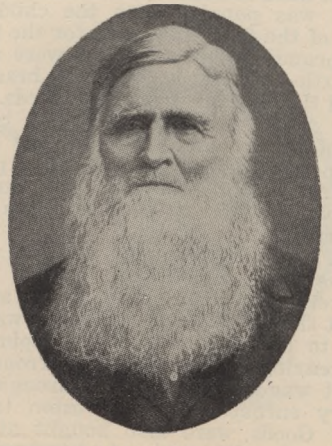
"I WENT out the Dam road, through Lover's Lane, across the Hell-Gate Bridge over the Devil's Backbone, and on a winding road that led through hills covered with bluebonnets to the Lord's pasture to do my courting," said L. A. Carter, a son-in-law of George Lord, one of the early cattlemen in DeWitt county.

Mr. Carter was not the only one who enjoyed visiting in the home of the Lords; first, the little log house and the later big house which is still standing today. The home was known far and near for its hospitality.

George Lord was born in Essex, England, in 1816, and received a very good education. He had an adventurous spirit and a desire for better opportunities than England afforded. In June, 1834, he came to Canada where he lived two years, then to New Orleans where he worked on Mississippi steamers.

In December of 1836 he joined a company of 75 men under Captain Lyons who were coming to Texas to take part in her war for independence. Landing in Galveston in February, 1837, he was immediately mustered into service at Camp Independence on the Lavaca River, as a part of Captain Holiday's company of Second Regimental Volunteers, who had escaped the Fannin massacre. The company was later consolidated with Captain Jordan's company and was sent to San Antonio in 1837. The following year Mr. Lord was discharged. In 1839 he went to Mexico with General Canales and fought for the Mexican Constitution of 1824, participating in the capture of Guerro, and several battles, including Alcantra, Matamoras, Monterrey, Saltillo and others.

Mr. Lord then settled in Victoria. While George Lord was not a ranger, he possessed all the qualifications of the early Texans; he could "ride like a Mexican, trail like an Indian, shoot like a Tennessean, and fight like a very devil." He was living at Victoria when he joined Captain Ewing Cameron's command which culminated in the battle and capture of Mier. An excellent account of this tragic expedition was written recently by Mrs. C. T. Traylor of Cuero and published in the Frontier Times. It contains several manuscripts written and sworn to by Mr. Lord.



GEORGE LORD

But, in order for one to appreciate really the depth of his character, the courage with which Mr. Lord could face danger, and then continue to discharge his duties as they came, a brief account of the lottery just after the battle of Mier is given here, and is taken from the Baker's Texas Scrap Book.

The battle of Mier lasted seventeen hours with a loss to the Mexicans of about one thousand killed and wounded, and on the side of Texas of eleven killed and nineteen wounded. The following were the terms of capitulation:

Terms of Surrender

First—all who give up their arms will be treated with the consideration which is in accordance with the character of the magnanimous Mexican nation. Second—Conformably with the petition that General Fisher has made, all persons belonging to the Santa Fe expedition will be treated in the same manner as the rest. Third—all who desire to avail themselves of these terms will enter the square and deliver up their arms.

The Texans were imprisoned in Perote prison; Mr. Lord was one of them.

The lottery spoken of was conducted in the following manner: White and black beans were drawn from an earthen mug or crock, 159 white and 17 black beans, the whole corresponding to the number of prisoners. The white beans signified exemption, and the black, death. It was evidently determined that Captain Cameron and the other officers should die, and the black beans were placed on top with this design. The mug was first presented to Cameron; next to the other officers, and lastly to the men. All acted with manly dignity and firmness. Some jested over the solemn ceremony. One said, "Boys, this is the tallest gambling I ever did." Another, "Raffling is nothing to this." As the black beans one after another were drawn, scarcely a change of countenance could be seen, while those who drew the white bean exhibited no joy. Mr. Lord drew a white bean. The doomed seventeen men were placed in separate confinement and were shot about sundown.

When Mr. Lord was released from Perote he went to New Orleans where in 1848 he married Katie Myer, a native of that city. She was not accustomed to the hardships of pioneer life. But she seemed to have realized right from the start that only by hard work would they be able to reap the good fortune they so ardently desired. So with the high hopes of youth and adventure they joined a wagon train of "Forty-Niners" bound for the California gold fields.

It was a long, slow, tedious and hazardous journey. Yet it was a wonderful trip over the rolling prairie through which meandered the curves of creeks and rivers. As they approached these streams there were often groves of timber of every shape with which the prairie mounds were studded, and through which were open spaces seemingly designed for the placing of homes. But Mr. and Mrs. Lord were facing the West now in quest of gold. They drove on with the covered wagon caravan, but enjoying the beauty of it all. There were nights spent around the camp fires on the prairies, preceded by a gorgeous sunset, as the sun, resembling a huge ball of fire, fell amidst the grass of the prairie. There was the gradeur of the mountains, some warmly wooded and some cold and bare. And as the caravan moved slowly on, every eye was alert for an approaching band of savage Indians. And there were some raids.

After reaching California claims were staked and Mr. Lord devoted his time to mining. The claim did not turn out so well. Mrs. Lord helped out financially by making and selling dried apple pies. The miners liked them and gladly paid her one dollar each for them.

"She made more by selling those pies than I made in the gold mine," was a laughing but affectionate remark of Mr. Lord's in later years.

After remaining there two years they decided they had staked a poor claim. Mr. Lord left it in the care of a friend, and they came back to Texas. What gold he had he sent to New Orleans to have coined into money.

They settled in DeWitt county on the

THE GEORGE LORD HOME
(From drawing by L. A. Carter)

1,280 acres of land which Mr. Lord had received from the Republic of Texas for his services in the Texas Army. He also bought large tracts adjoining this land, and could have purchased most any amount of acreage for 25 cents an acre. But it was unnecessary to buy more land on which taxes would have to be paid, since there was plenty of open range.

A log cabin, consisting of one room with a "lean-to" was built near the river so as to be more convenient to water. It was about 20 miles from Clinton, the nearest town, and then the county seat of DeWitt county. The house was a typical pioneer home, crudely built and lacking in conveniences and comforts. The furniture included a bedstead, chairs and a table, all of which were home-made. The howling winter winds had an annoying way of whistling through the cracks. Conditions were not much better in the summer, as there were no screens to protect the family from the stinging bites of the mosquitos.

Mrs. Lord did the cooking on a fireplace out-of-doors at first. Later an inside fireplace was built. Her utensils consisted of a "skillet and lid" and an iron pot in which she cooked beans. There was an abundance and variety of meat, wild turkey, hogs ran wild, and cattle were everywhere. Coffee was sometimes made of parched beans and corn, ground.

Mrs. Lord was busy early and late, cooking, washing, ironing, spinning and weaving. Dye was obtained mostly from the bark of trees. "We nearly always wore brown," recalls Katie, who is now Mrs. L. A. Carter.

DeWitt county is located in that section of South Texas where the cattle kingdom had its origin. The country was open, with mottes of timber offering shade and protection. Grass was plentiful, and in places remained green throughout the year. There was plenty of water in the running streams. Each year the cattle became more numerous, and at that time required very little care from their owner. Probably the biggest job was that of rounding up and branding the calves about twice each year.

Each Had a Brand

Mr. Lord's brand was a *Diamond-and-a-half*. As each child was born he was given a cow and a calf. A brand was registered for him, the *Diamond-and-a-half* with a number in the *half*. For instance, the figure "1" was placed in the *half diamond* for the first child, "2" for the second, and so on.

The increase from his cattle was used to supply spending money for the child. And the Longhorns were very prolific.

"My brand was a *Diamond-and-a-half* with the number "9" since I was so far down the line," Mrs. Carter stated. "I had such a nice bunch of cattle that I got a good price for them."

In the early days there were no ticks; no feeding to be done. Sometimes the cattle had to be moved from pasture to pasture during a drouth. But that was not much trouble because there were no fences. Mr. Lord seldom did any of this work. He directed his cattle industry which grew bigger each year. He felt that the Longhorns were good enough, so he did not bother about improving them. Sales were made to the local buyers who usually came to the ranch. In later years he had lots of trouble with cattle rustlers.

Mr. and Mrs. Lord were interested in their home. Just as soon as they could they built a big house for their growing family. It contained four large rooms, two upstairs and two downstairs, with a large hall between, and a kitchen and dining room. It is still standing today in the Cheapside community in a fair state of preservation.

Probably the feature of the new home that Mrs. Lord appreciated most was the bath room, which was built just back of the kitchen near the well. Even though the zinc tub had to have water poured into it, it was a vast improvement over the round wash tub used previously.

The nearest doctor was in Clinton, 20 miles away. A negro mid-wife usually attended Mrs. Lord when the babies came. One stayed in the home a long time and helped her and other mothers in the community.

Mr. Lord was a great lover of his home. Perhaps his adventures and the hardships of his early life made him appreciate home more. Everything apparently was running smoothly when the Civil War broke out. Mr. Lord could have claimed exemption because of age and previous service, but he enlisted with the home guard and served two years.

When the war was over he returned home where Mrs. Lord and the children had "kept the pot boiling." With the help of a negro woman and the children, she had managed the ranch while he was away.

The children were growing up. They attended school in a little country school house, walking the distance of three miles much of the time. Sometimes they rode horseback, three or four of them sometimes on one horse. There were school books to be carried, and the tin bucket containing the meat, bread and potatoes for "dinner."

But school was lots of fun. The boys and girls played together. Jumping rope, ante-over and town ball were favorite games.

Friday afternoons were called "Show Days." The parents would sometimes visit the school to hear the children make speeches, sing songs, and engage in spelling matches.

Mr. Lord stayed at home more closely after his return from the Civil War. He enjoyed playing with the children. They played cards and dominoes. Some of the children played the piano, and they all liked to read. The *Youth's Companion* was popular with the children.

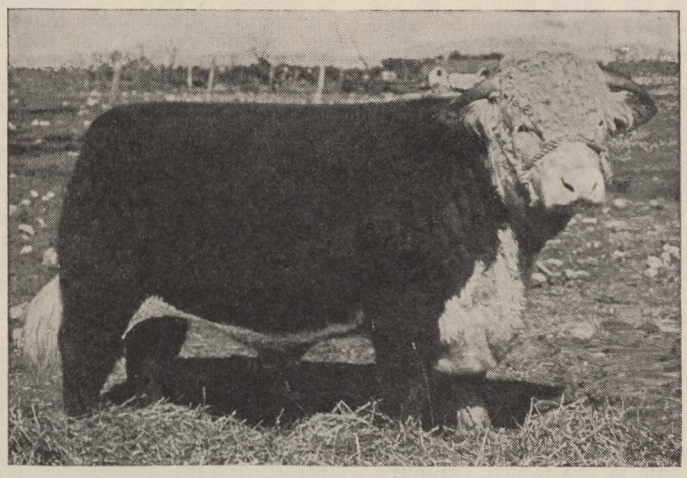
One of the favorite games for the boys was "branding cattle." Cobs were used for cattle. Great herds were branded around the fireside and in the yards.

"We went swimming, climbed trees, rode horseback and surveyed the pasture in general," says Katie, the present Mrs. Carter. "And it was fun to put a visiting girl on a horse if she was not accustomed to riding."

Mrs. Lord did not play with the children as much as did their father. She had every convenience in the home available at that time. But still there was so much to be done. Instead of spinning and weaving she bought cloth from the freight wagons that passed through the country enroute from Galveston to El Paso. Goods were also bought at Indianola. But the sewing had to be done.

Brook Hereford Ranch

BRADY, TEXAS



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She saved time and money, too, by making clothes of good substantial material. Then, as one child outgrew a garment it could be handed down to the next one in size.

"I was the ninth child," said Mrs. Carter, "and had to wear the hand-me-downs. But we had more money when I was small than when the older children were small. So mother was able to give me more thangs than she did the older children."

The school house was the community center. Sunday school and church services were conducted there. In the summer, camp meetings were held near by. Protracted meetings were held under a brush arbor. Everybody came and everybody visited.

Quilting parties were interesting social events. Mrs. Lord would put in the frames two, and if possible, three quilts, and invite every woman in the community. The guests came early and began quilting immediately. While they worked industriously to finish the quilts that day, it was really a social event. They visited with each other. It was here they kept up with the news of the community; recipes and home remedies for caring for the sick were exchanged. News of approaching weddings sometimes were told in whispers from person to person.

Visitors in the kitchen were equally as active. Mrs. Lord had baked ham, fried chicken, baked cakes, pies and bread the day before. But there were many "last touches" to add to the dinner. The long table in the dining room had to be "set" several times before all the guests could be served. Dishes had to be washed and dried between each serving. There were always certain women who preferred to help in the kitchen, others who "did such beautiful quilting" that each performed a job that she especially liked to do. Thus the day passed. Mrs. Lord would have two or three new quilts to be used to keep her family or some guest warm, and she and her neighbors were happier because of their visit with each other.

Another great occasion was the community spelling match. They would gather at the school, or at some home in the community. Two people would be selected to "choose sides." The adults and the children took part so each side had people of all ages. Sometimes it was a little embarrassing when a child "turned" his parents down.

Everybody attended the square dances. One fiddler, and sometimes two, provided the music. Mrs. Carter says, "I can hear 'Balance All,' even now." Other dances were the Schottische and the waltz.

Livestock Calendar

Purebred Angus Sales

May 15—L. R. Kershaw, Muskogee, Okla.
May 16—S. C. Fullerton, Miami, Okla.
May 17—J. B. Hollinger, Chapman, Kans.

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Purebred Hereford Sales

Apr. 15—Hugh White, Keller.
Apr. 24—W. D. Corley, Colorado Springs, Colo.
May 5—San Marcos Valley Breeders, San Marcos.

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General

Apr. 22—Okla. A. & M. College Feeders' Day, Stillwater, Okla.
May 6—Kansas State College Feeders' Day, Manhattan, Kans.
May 18-20—Conv. Montana Stock Growers, Livingston, Mont.
May 26-27—Conv. Oregon Cattle & Horse Growers, Myrtle Point, Ore.
May 26-27 — Conv. Washington Cattlemen, Okanogon, Wash.
June 8-10—Conv. Nebraska Stockgrowers, Alliance, Nebr.
June 22-24—Conv. Colo. Stock Growers & Feeders, Montrose, Colo.
July 20-21—Greer County Reunion & Rodeo, Mangum, Okla.
Sept. 23-Oct. 2—Golden Gate International Sheep and Wool Show, San Francisco, Calif.

Mrs. Carter met her husband at one of the dances. She says he was a very timid young man, and did not dance, but stood on the outside and watched the dancers through a window.

While Mr. Lord spent more time in play with the children, he was the more strict with them. When the children wanted to do something which they thought their father might not approve, they would persuade their mother to intercede.

There were no banks in that section so the money was usually kept in the dresser drawer. One time Mr. Lord told an Austrian from an adjoining community to come in and he would pay him for some work he had just finished.

"Are you going to let me see where you keep your money," he asked in surprise as Mr. Lord pulled out the drawer.

"Why, yes," said Mr. Lord, "Aren't you an honest Dutchman?"

Mr. Lord did bury some of his gold in the smokehouse. After his death Mrs. Lord dug up $1,000 there. A son, Henry Lee, who still lives in the old home found $20 in gold in the back yard recently that evidently had been dropped at that time.

As Mr. Lord grew older he spent more and more time at home and talked about the hard times of early years. He always had a good garden and a good orchard. He took pride in caring for them himself. No one dared to go into his garden without his permission. Indian peach trees were among his most prized trees. He set out 200 cabbage plants the day before he had his stroke. Mrs. Lord devoted more time to reading as she grew older.

Mr. Lord died in 1895, Mrs. Lord in 1905. They are buried on the Lord Ranch in sight of the home where they reared to maturity nine of the eleven children.

Only three of the children are living now. They are: Henry Lee, who lives on the old home place; J. E., who lives in the Cheapside community, and Katie, Mrs. Carter, who lives in Cuero.

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